

Remarks

Claims 1-2, 4-13 and 16-19 are pending in the present application. By this reply, claims 3, 14 and 15 have been canceled. Claims 1 and 11 are independent.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant acknowledges the Examiner's indication that claims 3-10 and 15-19 are objected to, but allowable if rewritten in independent form. Accordingly, to expedite prosecution only, independent claim 1 has been amended to incorporate therein allowable claim 3, and independent claim 11 has been amended to incorporate therein allowable claim 15 and intervening claim 14. This places the application in condition for allowance.

Claim Objection

Claims 1, 10 and 17 have been objected to because of certain minor informalities. These informalities have been corrected. Accordingly, the objection should be withdrawn.

35 U.S.C. § 103 Rejection

Claim 1, 2 and 11-14 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Murakami et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,667,317). This rejection is traversed.

Without acquiescing to any of the Examiner's allegations made in rejecting these claims, only to expedite prosecution, independent claims 1 and 11 have

been amended to incorporate therein allowable claims 3 and 15, respectively, as discussed above. Accordingly, the rejection is moot and should be withdrawn.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons and in view of the above clarifying amendments, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to reconsider and withdraw all of the objections and rejections of record, and earnestly solicits an early issuance of a Notice of Allowance.

Should there be any outstanding matters which need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Esther H. Chong (Registration No. 40,953) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

Applicant(s) respectfully petitions under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a) and 1.17 for a one-month extension of time in which to respond to the Examiner's Office Action. The Extension of Time Fee in the amount of \$120.00 is attached hereto.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and further replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By Esther H. Chong
Esther H. Chong, #40,953

P.O. Box 747
Falls Church, VA 22040-0747
(703) 205-8000

EHC:sld